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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES

February 19, 1974

HUNGARY

Foreign Minister on European Security

During a weekend trip to Austria, Foreign Minister Puja openly hoped that the third stage of the European Security conference would open in the summer. He again rejected those aspects of "freer movement" that are incompatible with the "sovereignty of states" and suggested that the "human contacts" issue might be more easily settled through bilateral agreements between individual countries. This reference may signal the latest Soviet tactic to squelch the freer movement issue.

Puja's trip to Vienna illustrates the special care Hungary devotes to its ties with Austria. Despite earlier indications, the two sides did not agree, however, on establishing visa-free travel between the two countries, supposedly because of Budapest's sparse tourist facilities.

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Premier Fock is slated to visit Austria in early May.

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BULGARIA

Pop Music Impresario Arrested

Genko Genov, a leading organizer of popular music performances by Western artists and director of the annual Golden Orpheus Pop Music Festival, was reportedly arrested at the Sofia airport on February 12 upon arrival from abroad. The police also reportedly searched Genov's apartment and closed the offices of Golden Orpheus for investigation.

The charges against Genov are not known, but he has probably engaged in the illegal accumulation of hard currency. Many Bulgars who travel frequently in the West have tried to reap personal profit from their travels, and authorities in Sofia have uncovered a number of these embezzlers in the past years. Genov's luck also appears to have run out. Known as a wheeler-dealer, he has often boasted to Western diplomats that "his friends in high places" would protect him.

The arrest of a prominent figure, especially in a public place, will assuredly get top billing on the Sofia grape vine. Genov's arrest is, however, not expected to halt efforts by well-placed Bulgarians to try to hoard hard currencies.

